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February 21, 2013

**Senate Committee on Outdoor Recreation and Tourism**  
**Senator Goeff Hansen, Chair**

May Watts, Paul & Jean Mooring are names you might not recognize. In 1963, May wrote a letter to the Chicago Tribune proposing to convert the abandoned Chicago, Aurora & Elgin electric railroad line into a nature path. May was a naturalist and writer and later visited Jean's garden club in Glen Ellyn, Illinois to recruit volunteers for the effort. Jean and eleven others soon became charter members of the Illinois Prairie Path non-profit corporation and the rails-to-trails movement was born. DuPage County purchased the first 21 miles in 1965, more acquisitions soon lengthened the trail to 61 miles in three counties, and the Illinois Prairie Path became the first successful rails-to-trails conversion in North America. Jean died earlier this month after committing most of her adult life to the Illinois Prairie Path and other conservation efforts. I had the privilege to live in DuPage County for 26 years and enjoy the Illinois Prairie Path on hundreds of walks and bike rides.

William Field, Joel Mikkelsen. These are names you now know and their roles in establishing the Hart-Montague Trail parallel those of May, Paul and Jean. I did not know William Field but I understand the vision he must have had to establish the first rail trail in beautiful West Michigan.

As a kid growing up in Oceana County in the 1950s, I heard the train whistles from our small farm west of Hart. Now, I have the privilege of living and working near the Trail in Hart while watching riders from all over the country journey into our small town wishing I could welcome them all and learn of their Trail experience while sharing my local history with them.

My personal life has been enriched by the visionary efforts of May, Paul, Jean, William and Joel...names that should be remembered for their contributions to quality of life in northern Illinois and west Michigan. It is entirely fitting and proper to honor William Field by attaching his name to the Hart-Montague Trail. Thank you for this opportunity to share my support for SB 154.

Stan Rickard  
City Manager  
City of Hart